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SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE MASS SOCIETY *

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In every society the possibility is continuously present that persons occupying approximately equivalent situations may find it expedient to cooperate rather than compete for the things which their societies make available in limited amounts to all. This possibility supplies the foundation for social stratification: the horizontal integration of social layers within whatever pyramids may arise in the social group as a whole. From this flows the frequent partial organization of preliterate societies into age and sex grades. Feudal societies of the world have been organized into estates. Contemporary capitalistic societies have been organized into classes. And finally, it seems that the modern mass societies are becoming partially sub-structured into elitist groups which find their ultimate reference point in the large scale organizations of our day.

THE NEW PROBLEM. The large number of studies of social stratification by contemporary sociologists in the post World War II period have been concerned with the social strata of small towns and local communities of one sort or other. Typical of such studies are those of Warner (1949), Hollingshead (1949), Centers (1949), and the majority of the contributors to the collected volume by Bendix and Lipset (1953). Comparatively few social scientists have concerned themselves with the social strata arising outside the local sphere and forming within the framework of national society. The special importance of the studies by C. Wright Mills (1956) and E. Digby Baltzell (1958) arises from the fact that they stand almost alone in dealing with the problem of stratification in the mass society.

It is a major contention of this study that in contemporary society social prominence appears in new dimensions. Indicative of these new forms of prominence are the several listings or registers of selected individuals: *The Social Register* (1960), *Who's Who in America* (1960) and, most recently, the *Celebrity Register* (1959). The *Social Register* lists families of high status position throughout the metropolitan areas of the country, while *Who's Who in America*

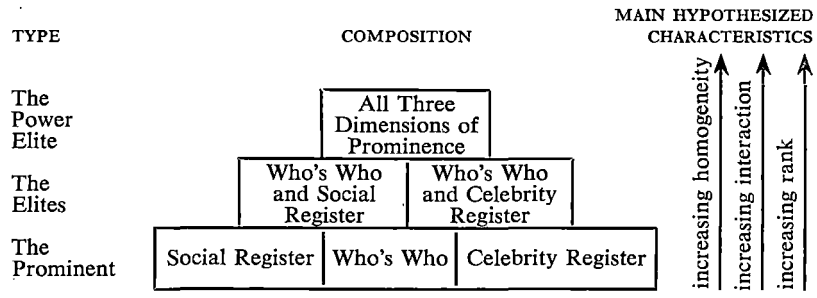
*The data for the present study were gathered in the Spring of 1961. I am obligated to Professor Don Martindale of the University of Minnesota who was consulted on problems arising in the course of the study.

lists brief biographies of leading men and women of achievement across the nation. The *Celebrity Register,* the newest listing, contains short sketches of well known nationwide personalities. All three indices are serious, formalized listings of contemporary individuals who have highly ranked national recognition.

The emergence of formal published indices of prominent persons is in itself evidence of the fact that the problem of social stratification has reached an essentially new stage. It would have been quite unnecessary in all previous societies to have to resort to publications to make the prominent known to one another. Even the complex societies of the past were so tiny by comparison with modern nation states and the number of prominent individuals was so small that the employment of a formal published register was quite unnecessary.

Theoretically, the importance of the Mills-Baltzell studies of stratification are established in the first place in that they have turned to the contemporary formal registers of prominence for their empirical materials rather than to the isolated local hierarchies which have occupied the attention of the majority of students. Moreover, Mills and Baltzell have done more than call attention to the new dimensions of prominence; they have offered theories of the formation of new kinds of social strata peculiar to the mass society. Mills has described what he believes to be newly forming highest stratum which he describes as a Power Elite (1956:9-13, 288, 292). Baltzell has described as Elites persons appearing in more than a single one of the new typically modern registers of prominence (1958: 31-48).

THEORY AND METHOD OF THE PRESENT STUDY. The present study is exploratory. Three hypotheses were to be tested: (1) the *Social Register, Who's Who,* and the *Celebrity Register* represent distinct kinds of social prominence; (2) some persons appear in two and in all three indices; and (3) the Mills-Baltzell hypothesis is correct that individuals who rank high in two or more dimensions of prominence form a distinct elite on levels above those who are listed only in one index. The Mills-Baltzell hypothesis is diagrammed:



According to the hypothesis in each level, from the merely Prominent to the Power Elite, individuals are (a) more homogeneous in their attributes and (b) increasingly interactive with one another.

Elites are significantly different from the Prominent on all main characteristics.

The method by which these hypotheses were tested consisted in drawing samples from all three types of indices. In order to reduce the study to manageable limits, samples of persons from Boston and Philadelphia were drawn. These two cities were also in part chosen as a basis for study because Amory's *Proper Bostonians* (1947) and Baltzell's *Philadelphia Gentlemen* (1958) provide descriptive data for these cities.

The *Who's Who* sample for both cities was taken from the Vocational-Geographical Index accompanying volume 30 of *Who's Who in America.* The index stratifies the entire *Who's Who* population, first, by state and, then, by city or town. Furthermore, in those cities where the size of the population warrants it, there is a more detailed subdivision of individuals according to an occupational classification scheme. The Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area was used as a geographical definition of cities because the stratification for *Who's Who* did not overlap with the *Social Register* and the *Celebrity Register.* In this way geographical consistency was gained across each of the samples. Finally, to minimize the unknown biases, a strict randomizing technique was introduced for selecting the sample population. Each sample was then drawn independently, except for the *Celebrity Register* sample, in which case the sample exhausts the small population of Boston and of Philadelphia.

The *Social Register* lists each socially prominent family together with addresses, children, schools, clubs, and telephone numbers. The typical family is listed somewhat as follows:

Boston, Mr. & Mrs. P. George II (Elizabeth Wolcott Adams)
Sm.Tv.Cy.D.Ch.Ncd.Bn.Hn.H'25
Boston, Miss Elizabeth—at Smith.....
Boston, Mr. Peter G. III—at Harvard..... Phone 5-1234 Copley
Juniors, Miss Alice W.—at St. Timothy's... 789 Needham Rd.
Mr. Wolcott A.—at Groton..... Chestnut Hill, Mass.

Mr. Boston belongs to six clubs, the Somerset (Sm.), the Tavern (Tv.), the Country (Cy.), the Dedham Country and Polo Club (D.) in Boston, and the Brooks (Bn.) and Harvard (Hn.) in New York City. He graduated from Harvard in 1925. His children are attending appropriate boarding schools and the family lives in one of the older fashionable neighborhoods of the city. The family idea is illustrated in the use of family given names. Mrs. Boston's maiden name and associations, the Chilton Club (Ch.) and National Society of Colonial Dames (Ned.) are listed, but the college attended is never listed in the *Social Register.*

The samples for Boston and Philadelphia were drawn from the Boston and the Philadelphia *Social Registers.* However, no information about occupations, place of origin, religion, and directive or executive activities was available from the Registers. Since this study is comparative, additional information on the above charactirestics

was secured for a part of the random sample from the followng current sources: the *Polk City Directory* (1960) for Boston (unavailable for Philadelphia), *Who's Who in America, Who's Who in the East* (1960), and *Who's Who in Commerce and Industry* (1960).

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS DENOTED IN ONLY ONE INDEX OF SOCIAL PROMINENCE. In order to isolate in pure form the characteristics of persons in the three indices, the random sample of Bostonians and Philadelphians from each index were combined. All persons listed in two or more indices were eliminated from the samples. Only pure cases of achieved, celebrated or ascribed prominence are represented in the samples in this section.

A comparison of the three indices with respect to occupational groupings indicates significant differences. The occupations included under Major Institutional Hierarchies are businessmen, government officials and military men, educators, clergymen, independent professionals, and labor leaders, while Modern Mass Occupations include persons in sports, entertainments and the arts.

TABLE 1. Types of Prominence as Related to the Indices of Prominence.

Type Occupation in	*Who Who's*	*Social Register*	*Celebrity Register*
Major Institutional Hierarchies	87.2%	96.9%	0%
Modern Mass Occupations	12.8%	3.1%	100%
Total:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Chi square= 109.93, $p<.001$			

The table supplies confirming evidence to the hypothesis that the pure celebrities of entertainment, sports and mass arts provide the core of the *Celebrity Register*. Some 3% of the *Social Register* entries were associated with the mass communications industries and sports, while about 13% of the people in *Who's Who* listed occupations in similar areas.

The major differences between men of achievement and the registered gentlemen are in the areas of business, independent professions, communications, and education. Some 85% of the *Social Register* sample is involved in business and professional activities, mostly in banking (68%) and in law (66%), while some 46% of those in *Who's Who* listed business and professional occupations. 33% of the *Who's Who* sample were educators, but only 5% of the *Social Registerites* were in education. Nearly a tenth of the *Who's Who* group were associated with the communications industry.

As the preceding table has shown, in occupational composition individuals from the three indices vary separately. An individual in the *Social Register* is twice as likely to be a businessman as a person listed in *Who's Who*. On the other hand, educators appear three times more often in *Who's Who* than in the *Social Register*. Generally, an individual whose achievement is noteworthy in any occupa-

tion may appear in *Who's Who,* while a more narrow range seems to be open to men in the *Social Register.* The persons in the *Celebrity Register* are in entertainment and sports.

The proportion of people who have attained a college education in each of the groupings is different. Nearly 84% of the persons who have achieved prominence and some 92% of the *Social Registerites* are college graduates, but only 42% of the celebrities are college trained. Since most of the celebrities acquire their skills while performing in their special fields, this is not at all surprising. However, the type of educational background differentiates the persons in the *Social Register* from the others. The following table summarizes the difference:

TABLE 2. Type of College Education as related to Achievement and to Ascription.

	Indices	
Type Colleges	*Who's Who*	*Social Register*
Ivy Colleges	34.4%	89.0%
Other Colleges	65.6%	11.0%
Total:	100.0%	100.0%

Chi square=150.36, $p<.001$

High social prominence through ascription or achievement and educational attainment are positively correlated. But the groups were qualitatively differentiated—a fashionable Ivy college education serves to partition the two groupings of people. Furthermore, the extent to which a family-selected sort of education enters into the socialization of the *Social Register* entries is presented in Table 3:

TABLE 3. Listed Private School Background as Related to the Three Indices of Prominence.

	Indices		
Type School	*Who Who's*	*Social Register*	*Celebrity Register*
Private School	23.2%	57.6%	8.4%
No Private School	76.8%	42.4%	91.6%
Total:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi square=31.16, $p<.001$.

Nearly 58% of the men in the *Social Register* reported some sort of private school education. According to Baltzell, private school attendance is an excellent index of ascribed position, "even more indicative than neighborhood, religion, or *Social Register* affiliation" (1958:295). The data indicate that persons wth private schooling are more likely to have been ascribed prominence through their families than they are likely to have achieved it.

Similar comparisons were run on members of the three registers

with respect to age, religion, social club affiliations and place of origin. In all cases the differences between the samples were significant at the .001 level. It may be observed that the first hypothesis (i.e., that the *Social Register, Who's Who* and the *Celebrity Register* represent distinct kinds of social prominence) was verified.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS IN TWO OR MORE REGISTERS. The problem remains whether there are discernible differences between individuals whose prominence is recognized along two or more dimensions in contrast to persons prominent in only one area. As noted, both Mills and Baltzell have suggested that persons ranking high in two or more dimensions of prominence represent new types of contemporary elites. Moreover, they argue that these elites form a "higher circle" above persons prominent in only one area. Their activities are interlocked and they maintain a solidarity among themselves which sets them apart from the rest of the population. If this is so, those persons with prominence denoted in two or more indices of social prominence should show greater homogeneity of characteristics among themselves and significant differences from individuals recognized as prominent along one dimension.

A comparison of people in two or more indices and those persons denoted in one index with respect to general types of occupations reveals some differences. The broad division follows Mills insofar as he locates occupations according to major institutional hierarchies and by modern mass occupations. The findings, however, do not demonstrate consistent dissimilarities between people in one and people in two or more indices of prominence.

Not one but two almost equal occupational worlds are reflected by the *Celebrity Registerites* also denoted in *Who's Who.* Compared with the occupational grouping of men who are prominent through

TABLE 4. Types of Occupation as Related to Persons in Two or More and in Only One Index of Social Prominence.

Types of Occupations Located in	Individuals Listed in: *All Three*	*Who's Who & Social Register*	*Who's Who & Celebrity Register*	*Who's Who*	*Social Register*	*Celebrity Register*
Major Institutional Hierarchies	66.6%	95.1%	56.2%	87.2%	96.9%	0%
Modern Mass Occupations	33.4%	4.9%	43.8%	12.8%	3.1%	100%
Totals:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Tests of Significance:
All Three and WW&SR, no test
All Three and WW&CR, not significant
WW&CR and WW&SR, $\chi^2 = 57.10$, $p<.001$
WW&CR and CR, $\chi^2 = 12.26$, $p<.001$
WW&CR and WW, $\chi^2 = 30.11$, $p<.001$
WW&SR and SR, not significant
WW&SR and WW, $\chi^2 = 8.06$, $p\leq.01$

achievement alone, the difference is significant. There is also a difference when contrasted to the pure celebrity; however, there is greater occupational homogeneity within the pure celebrity group than among those whose notoriety is coupled with achievement.

Among the men commanding recognition both for achievements and through ascription in contrast to men of achievement, there is a discernible difference. Moreover, the men listed in both the *Social Register* and *Who's Who* are occupational more homogeneous than people listed in *Who's Who*. There is no significant difference between occupations of people listed in the *Social Register* and the group included in both *Who's Who* and the *Social Register*.

Furthermore, among the elites, which are those individuals with high rank in two or more dimensions of prominence, the differences are very extreme or insignificant. The findings do not indicate greater occupational homogeneity among elites, nor do they indicate consistent differences between the elites and other socially prominent individuals. With respect to occupation the data are inconclusive.

With the exception of the celebrities, at least nine in every ten persons in the samples have college degrees regardless of whether they are denoted in only one or more than one register. However attendance at Ivy colleges tends to separate the elites from the presumed non-elites.

TABLE 5. Type of College Attended as Related to Persons in Two or More and Only One Index of Prominence.

	Individuals Listed in:				
Type College	*All Three*	*Who's Who & Social Register*	*Who's Who & Celebrity Register*	*Who's Who*	*Social Register*
Ivy Colleges	81.2%	81.5%	51.1%	34.4%	89.0%
All Other College	18.8%	18.5%	48.9%	65.6%	11.0%
Totals:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Tests of Significance:
WW&SR and SR, $\chi^2 = 18.49$, $p<.001$
WW&SR and WW&CR, $\chi^2 = 18.24$, $p<.001$
WW&SR and WW, $\chi^2 = 105.79$, $p<.001$
WW&CR and WW, $\chi^2 = 2.73$, $p\leq.10$
WW&CR and All Three, $\chi^2 = 4.26$, $p\leq.05$
WW&SR and All Three, no test

In all tests of significance in which two dimensions of prominence are coupled, only one exception appears in the percent of individuals who have been schooled at fashionable Ivy colleges, and this not in terms of significance but internal composition. Men who are prominent both because of achievements and because of status ascription reflect less homogeneity than individuals denoted only in the *Social Register*. Several of the men who had not attended Ivy colleges, did attend the older esteemed Philadelphia colleges of Haverford and Swarthmore.

A variety of additional comparisons were run between persons appearing in only one register, persons appearing in more than one and persons appearing in all three. By and large there were significant differences in each case. So far, it would appear, there is some evidence for the plausibility of the Mills-Baltzell theory of the consolidation of the new social strata at the top in contemporary society.

However, while it is clear that there is a growing plurality of persons who cross the lines of prominence as reflected in the contemporary registers, there was nothing in the data to suggest that persons who appear, for example, in both the *Celebrity Register* and *Social Register* are of higher rank than members of either *Celebrity* or *Social Register* alone. As a matter of fact, there is some tendency on the part of the publishers of the *Social Register* to drop a member if he has the "misfortune" to appear in the *Celebrity Register*. Furthermore, there is no real evidence to suggest that a member of both *Social Register* and *Who's Who* ranks higher than a member of the *Social Register* alone. Finally, there is even less evidence to suggest that persons whose names appear in all three registers are of higher rank than individuals listed in any two or any one. Similarly, there is no evidence of an increasing homogeneity and interaction between persons appearing in more than one register. Hence, the samples supply no confirmation of the Mills-Baltzell theory that contemporary society is being dominated by a new Power Elite.

SUMMARY. In conclusion, the tests indicated differences on all attributes between the *Social Register, Who's Who* and the *Celebrity Register*. The samples tested were listed in only one index of prominence. Generally, they reflect the characteristics peculiar to each of the indices.

The *Social Register* does reflect high incidence of attributes associated with the upper social strata. The persons denoted by the Register seem to be prominent through status ascription.

Who's Who reflects men whose achievements are noteworthy. The men in the samples were important in their respectice fields. They occupied important positions in business, government, and other organizations. Those who were not in such position had gained national stature among their peers in terms of ability in special areas of accomplishment.

The core of the *Celebrity Register* is formed by the professional celebrities. In occupation and in other attributes the celebrities in the sample reflected the composition of celebrities throughout the nation. The fact that no celebrities were in other occupations casts some suspicion back onto *Who's Who*. Notoriety probably is a factor in the recognition of some persons denoted in it. However, there is no doubt that *Who's Who* is basically an index of achievement. A comparison of businessmen, educators and men listed in other occupations in *Who's Who in America* with people in similar occupations in *Who's Who in the East* does reveal changes in characteristics.

The second hypothesis is also conclusively proved. There are per-

sons listed in two and in all three indices. This had to be tested since it was not known if an individual would be prominent in more than one index. In order to prepare the grounds for future study it was necessary to set out the dimensions of prominence and to determine the incidence of individuals with prominence along two or more dimensions. There is, however, no conclusive proof of the final hypothesis that the Mills-Baltzell elite hypothesis is correct.

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